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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the dilemma of job immobility for the married professional woman who, by subordinating mobility to her marriage, faces a problem of professional growth within the constraints of a fixed location. Solutions to this problem are suggested, using an immobile married female psychologist as an example. An adaptation of the "Twenty Uses" method, i.e., 20 suggestions for professional growth, are enumerated and discussed. The first 10 suggestions are general ideas, while the last 10 ideas offer more specific activities for either clinical work or academia. It is noted that the "Twenty Uses" are useful for any professional woman who has access to the postal service, professional literature, and cooperative colleagues. The method suggested is also helpful for other professionals, such as the physically disabled, who may be immobile. (NRB)

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Women's Problems: Immobility and Professional Growth

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Women's Problems: Immobility and Professional Growth

In the present economic climate, job immobility is a problem common in academic circles. For the married female psychologist, despite all the advances made in her access to new fields and in assertiveness, immobility is more of a problem, however, than it is for her male colleague. If her husband is an academic, she may be confronted with covert or overt resistance to hiring a married couple. If he is a practicing professional or businessman tied to a specific location, she may be forced to choose between two items of high priority to her: her family and her career.

As the number of married women with careers has increased, so has the literature concerned with them. Much of this literature has focused on the multiple-role aspects of the dual-career woman's life (Hunt & Hunt, 1977; Nadelson & Eisenberg, 1977; Rice, 1979; Lieber, 1980). The questions raised in this material center on: With what strains does she have to cope in her dual roles? In what ways does she juggle her priorities? What are the effects of her career and multiple roles on the marital relationship? Does she find that her family status is considered, positively or negatively, in her professional situation? If she has young children, how does she handle child care? The emphasis throughout this type of study is on the potential for conflict in the life of the dual-career woman, and, sometimes, on her techniques for reducing or resolving such conflicts.

Comparatively little attention has been paid, on the other hand, to the priority conflict engendered by the issue of mobility (Allen & Wilkie, 1976; Marwell, Rosenfeld & Spilerman, 1979). Even Bird (1979) spends less

than two pages (out of 322) on the issue of who follows whom in a two-career marriage. Yet, in a study of dual-career couples working in co-ordinated fields, job mobility was frequently cited as a problem. Some of the respondents in Butler and Paisley's study (1979) indicated that locating two related jobs in the same institution or locality was quite difficult. They found they had three major options: 1) stay where they were and limit their professional horizons; 2) accept unemployment for one member for a period of time when the other member receives a very good job offer; or 3) live apart. The third option is not generally viewed as desirable for a number of reasons, some of which relate to the strain on the marriage itself and some of which are more concerned, according to Allen and Wilkie (1976) with such practical matters as costs, conflicting schedules, and waste of time. A fourth option, staying in place and working toward advancement, was not mentioned but is the subject of this paper.

In those few articles that do attend to mobility as an issue, the focus is usually placed on the differential value of the husband's and wife's careers (Bryson, Bryson, Licht & Licht, 1976; Berger, Foster, Wallston & Wright, 1977). The outcome of efforts to make an egalitarian decision in the case of academic couples, according to this research, is more often than not the traditional one. That is, the couple stays where the husband's job is. In a follow-up study of dual-career marriages, Poloma, Pendleton, and Garland (1981) reported that in <u>none</u> of their cases where a geographic move had been made was that move for the benefit of the wife's career opportunities. These were predominantly academic couples. There is less research available on decision-making where the husband is not an academic.

For the time being, let us assume that our major concern is with the married female psychologist, alluded to earlier, who has subordinated career mobility to the higher priority, for her, of marriage and family. She is typical of Kaslow and Schwartz's subjects (1978) who did not wish to make the total investment necessary for career advancement at the expense of their families. We will also assume that she either obtains a job in her field at an institution of higher education or opens a private clinical or consulting practice. Her problem now is to grow professionally within the constraints of a fixed location. In what ways can she develop her professional stature while remaining geographically riveted?

To be practical, the responses of our psychologist's problem should require as few extra resources as possible. Given the problem, one path to finding solutions is to apply creative problem-solving techniques, especially an adaptation of the "Twenty Uses" method suggested by Osborn (1963). This approach is ideal for anyone anywhere with access to cooperative colleagues, professional literature, and a functioning postal service. It is, in a sense, making lemonade when, professionally speaking, all one seems to have are lemons.

Finding Twenty Avenues

Whether academician or clinician, the geographically immobile female psychologist can easily take certain steps toward the fourth option, working toward advancement. Some of these are so obvious that they may be overlooked, while others depend on individual initiative and/or fortuitous circumstances. To begin with, she can:

1. Join the national and local psychological associations and attend their meetings as often as possible. This activity provides personal contacts and professional literature, both of which can stimulate growth.

2. Volunteer for committee work within professional organizations, much of which can be done with a minimum of travel. In this work, our psychologist can probe problems, help guide the policies of the organization, and be recognized by her peers as an active and committed colleague.

3. Attend workshops and other special programs offered near her home base. These offer new information or a different perspective relevant to establishing private practice, research, teaching, and consulting. Often, one idea gained from such a workshop will lead the psychologist to a wide variety of possible research or consulting possibilities.

4. Build on the groundwork of the dissertation. That is, she can write papers for publication or for presentation at meetings, and/or she can pursue the research to a deeper level or into related areas.

5. Correspond with scholars with similar interests both for further information on their work and for possible joint research in the future.

6. Find a female role model. Observe how she functions. Note whether her work is independent or with colleagues. Find out if she is willing to share her knowledge of the niceties and politics of psychology as it is practiced in a particular location.

7. Meet other women psychologists and women in related fields. Develop a support network in which information and efforts are shared. Years ago, for example, I met a young woman at a party who was working on her Ph.D. in Psychology on a part-time basis. That chance meeting led me to

the same institution. A few years later, another young woman met me at a bridge party with the same result. We three, and others, are still exchanging information, doing joint studies, and making referrals to each other.

8. Write. Write book reviews, comments, or case studies, and submit them for publication. Readers connect the author with activity and interest in Psychology and may seek out the author by mail or at meetings, again increasing the personal contacts that can lead to new professional activities. An added benefit of reviewing books is that new works are added to one's library at no cost.

9. Do research. For example, an academic psychologist can study the effects of various instructional modifications on student learning, or replicate someone else's study to confirm or refute the original results.

10. Participate in a community project on the impact of new housing on neighborhoods, or aid in the development of a drug/wife/or child abuse prevention program. This can be professionally and psychically rewarding as well as a civic contribution.

Other activities are more specific to either clinical work or academia. There is no intention of neglecting psychologists in industry, but they tend to have less need for outside stimulation of their duties or to follow the "publish or perish" dictum.

11. A clinician or consulting psychologist might well become the local expert in such matters as child custody in divorce and adoption cases, or on how to handle families where traumatic events have occurred,

such as having a grown child become part of a counter-culture movement. Acquisition of knowledge in the area of family law of the home state would clearly be an asset here, and would itself represent professional growth in a specific area. The role of expert witness in family matters is an expanding one as the divorce rate continues to climb and as more and more custody problems are taken to court.

12. For the academic psychologist, maximizing use of inter-library loan privileges is important in keeping up with new ideas, techniques, and research results. At least professionally, the librarian, rather than a diamond, can be "a girl's best friend."

13. Developing a sharper focus on a limited aspect of one of the psychologist's areas of interest can lead to new theories and applications. For example, instead of trying to study problems of bilingual students of all grade levels, she can focus on the learning problems of Korean immigrant pre-adolescents or on learning and bilingualism in one subject area.

14. Conversely, expansion of the interest area, including new aspects of it, can lead to new specialties and/or a new job. An interest in the gifted learner can be expanded, for instance, to explore means of identifying giftedness in under-achievers or disadvantaged students.

Sometimes, it should be noted, the convergent and divergent thinking patterns can be combined as one applies divergent thinking to the narrowed area of interest.

15. Doing interdisciplinary research can bring psychic and professional rewards to all involved. My own work with a history professor has led to one completed book, three more in preparation, about a dozen joint

papers in print, another dozen papers delivered at professional meetings, and the development and joint teaching of two new courses for our Campus. She's absorbed a great deal of information and theory in Psychology, and I've learned more about nineteenth-century France, restrictive immigration laws, and the Holocaust than any textbook ever tried to teach me.

16. Vacation travel can often provide opportunities for meeting other psychologists, visiting institutions of interest, or attending international meetings. This is all highly stimulating and often leads to the expansion of one's professional horizons and networks. My husband and I have, for example, visited day nurseries in Finland, Sweden, Denmark, and Israel; and "open-classroom" English primary school; and universities in several countries, always acquiring new perspectives and new friendly colleagues along the way. In fact, I first met an ICP member in Tel Aviv this way, and she and I have enjoyed correspondence on professional matters as well as meeting at conferences ever since.

17. If our immobile female psychologist can't travel, let her join ICP in the SHARE project and welcome visiting psychologists to her home. The opportunities for stimulation and new friendships are as rewarding at home as they are away.

18. Becoming a mentor, and perhaps a role model, to a gifted and interested pre-college student converts the "taker" into a "giver." There is great satisfaction to be found in helping someone else to grow, and a strong sense of pride to be had several years hence in finding that this effort has been a real contribution to the achievements of a budding psychologist or scholar.

19. Enlisting one's literate children and/or aging parents in clipping magazine and newspaper articles of special interest, or having them watch relevant TV programs when our psychologist is at work, creates new allies in the battle to keep current, and reduces possible sources of alienation within the family. With the home-bound elderly, especially, this new responsibility provides a purpose for living and an increase in self-esteem.

20. If a clinician or otherwise non-academic psychologist, our heroine can develop and present a seminar on a specific area of her competence. Adult learning is a growing movement among laymen as well as professionals, and takes place in adult school settings as well as one-day "how-to-do-it" workshops. An academician, by contrast, might turn to short-term consulting work as a means of broadening her experience and combatting "burn-out." In either case, the new form of applying one's knowledge represents an opportunity for professional growth.

There is no question today that the academic psychologist, particularly, must publish to gain tenure and promotion. Almost every one of the twenty approaches suggested to reduce the limitations of geographic immobility can help in that task. The end of the professional world is not in sight for the ambitious female psychologist locked in place by family commitments, for there is ample space for development as a scholar if she exploits local resources and uses her initiative. Similarly, the clinical psychologist must venture out of her office if she is to acquire a wide range of diagnostic and therapeutic techniques as well as an increased roster of clients.

It should be added that geographic immobility is not limited to married female psychologists. Physically handicapped professionals and others may not be mobile for a wide variety of reasons. Application of this modification of the "Twenty Uses" technique is equally valid for them. In closing, let me suggest that if these first twenty ideas don't provide enough stimulation for professional growth, it's time to use a twenty-first--brainstorming with one's husband!

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